

IN/ThROUGH - The Power of Cross-sectoral Synergy between Education and Sport

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LOCAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENSURING INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT TO EDUCATION IN AND THROUGH SPORT

Below presented local policy recommendations (further referred as: INTRO policy recommendations) are designed to complement existing public youth strategies and plans, ensuring their recognition and support toward education of young people in and through sport on promoting European project and intercultural dialogue. These recommendations are result of the cross-sectoral and trans-national collaboration between key stakeholders in the respective field – local public institutions, sport clubs and youth organizations.

By acknowledging that:

- a) Promotion of intercultural dialogue and strengthening of European project among citizens and especially young people, are of increased importance for the future of Europe,
- b) Rooting European fundamental values in the life of local communities and young people is a cornerstone of societal and their personal development, and key step toward achieving European Citizenship,
- c) Cross-sectoral synergy between grassroots sport and education is a powerful driving force for resolution and transformation of the social and transnational challenges,
- d) Sport as neutral language and most favourite form of activism among youth people plays vital role in their social education,
- e) Education in and through sport can significantly raise awareness of young people and support them in achieving lifelong education goals of enhanced solidarity and tolerance, understanding and appreciating values of equality, diversity and peace,
- f) Youth participation in sport and health-enhancing physical activities need to be increased in Croatia, North Macedonia and Serbia, having in mind that this participation level is lower than EU average, and that physical and mental health of young people is at risk,

We, the representatives of the IN/ThROugh project consortium, call local authorities to recognize and integrate following INTRO policy recommendations into their relevant local youth strategies and plans:

- 1) ***Embed European values of Peace, Solidarity, Tolerance, Diversity and Equality as a cornerstone of the local youth strategies / action plans.*** We believe that promotion, protection and wide spreading of these fundamental European values among young people on local level is of paramount importance due to intense and direct nature of relations between local policies and youth. All those values are questioned in EU and accession candidate countries by the growing illiberal, populist and autocratic thoughts. Hence, ensuring that complete local youth strategies and/or actions plans are focused on addressing these values will make significant contribution to the promotion of European project and strengthening of intercultural dialogue among young people.
- 2) ***Clearly recognize a problem of lack of practicing sport and health-enhancing physical activities among young people, as well as its impact on their health and well-being.*** Though there are no European wide researches on impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the level of practicing sport, many national surveys in EU and organizational experience are suggesting a big decline in the field (schools were closed, organized sport activities were and still are limited, etc.). According to the last Eurobarometer survey these numbers were fairly satisfactory even before pandemic started. Therefore, recognizing this problem in the local youth strategies and/or action plans will inspire greater actions toward boosting youth participation in sport and health-enhancing physical activities on local level.
- 3) ***Clearly recognize a need for youth education and support for engaging into intercultural dialogue and strengthening the European project among them.*** Future of Europe depends on the youth involvement in the life of our European societies and respective local communities. Young people who are not exposed to the opportunities of participation in intercultural dialogue and activities that are providing clear understanding on benefits and impact which European project has on the life of European citizens, tend to have more skeptical beliefs and behaviors. Hence, in order to create more open, tolerant and inclusive local communities that are based on the respect of European fundamental values and human rights we need to ensure space for youth participation in intercultural dialogue among their peers and engage them into activities that are strengthening European project and concept of European Citizenship among them. Therefore, local authorities are invited to recognize this need in their strategic documents and incite relevant stakeholders to design future actions in the field.

- 4) ***Introduce concept of education in and through sport as a powerful driving force behind the resolution and transformation of the social and trans-national challenges.*** Sport as a neutral language and most favorite form of activism among young people plays a vital role in their social education. Hence, education in and through sport can significantly raise awareness of young people and support them in achieving lifelong education goals of enhanced solidarity and tolerance, understanding and appreciating values of equality, diversity and peace.
- 5) ***Encourage cross-sectoral cooperation between key stakeholders in the field of education and sport.*** Local strategic documents in the field of youth and sport should prioritize greater cross-sectoral cooperation and synergy between schools and youth organizations from one side, and sport clubs and sport organizations from the other. This cross-sectoral exchange and synergy is important mechanism for inspiring innovation and creativity in addressing social challenges and engaging young people.
- 6) ***Foster trans-national collaboration in addressing European project among young people and engaging them into intercultural dialogue with the peers from other countries.*** Local authorities should use their existing mechanisms to support and facilitate greater level of trans-national collaboration among stakeholders in the field of education and sport and on the topics of intercultural dialogue and European project. By fostering this, local authorities will support experiencing process among young people as the one which often have the biggest impact on beliefs and behaviors of young people.
- 7) ***Increase/dedicate funding for education in and through sport as a tool for resolving and transforming social and trans-national challenges.*** Financial and technical resources are needed for youth organizations and sport clubs/organizations for organizing educational events and programs that are engaging young people in intercultural dialogue and promotion of European project among them. Therefore, local authorities are invited to dedicate, or if they are doing it already to increase, financial resources that will allow these activities to take place at local level.
- 8) ***Support activities that are directed on promotion and enhancement of capacities of youth organizations and schools to use sport-based methodologies in their work with young people.*** Local authorities are invited to integrate into their annual action plans a support/implementation of activities that will inspire youth organizations which doing non-formal education, as well as formal education actors, to start using sport-based methodologies in work with young people. By doing this, local authorities will enhance capacities of youth organizations and schools to diverse their educational methodologies, and also

engage into boosting practicing sport and health-enhancing physical activities of young people.

- 9) ***Support activities that are directed on promotion and enhancement of capacities of sport clubs and organizations to use non-formal methodologies in their work with young people.*** Local authorities are invited to integrate into their annual action plans a support/implementation of activities that will inspire sport clubs and organizations to integrate non-formal education into their work with young people. By doing this, local authorities will empower sport clubs and organizations to actively engage into social education of young people.
- 10) ***Promote benefits of education in and through sport among young people in their local communities.*** Local authorities as most trusted institutions and closest to its citizens have highly important role in promotion of benefits which young people are having from active participation in activities that are based on education in and through sport. Therefore, annual action plans of these institutions should envisage activities and campaigns that will promote those benefits toward young people, inspiring them to seek and engage in such opportunities.
- 11) ***Foster greater inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities through education in and through sport.*** Education in and through sport proved to be extremely efficient tool in fostering inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities in the life of local communities and the society. Hence, this topic should have important position in the local action plans and strategies concerning young people as it targets those who have difficulties to engage into the life of the local communities and in practicing sport and health enhancing physical activities.